

Opening Report to the Founding Congress of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal

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The Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party – Fourth International), which is in political solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), held its founding congress on June 13–15, 2025. The party’s official formation process was completed in August.

The congress began with this opening report by Ula? Sevinç (Ate?çi), who was elected as national chairman. The congress also unanimously adopted three resolutions: “Statement of Principles” (official program), “The Historical and International Foundations of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal,” and the “Constitution.” Many greetings were sent to the founding congress from ICFI sections and sympathizer groups all over the world. The resolutions and greetings will be published on the WSWS in the coming days.

Today we have gathered here for an historic event: the founding congress of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal. For the first time in Turkey, a party affiliated with the Fourth International—founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky, who led the October Revolution of 1917 alongside Vladimir Lenin, and led by the International Committee since 1953—is being established.

We are convening the founding congress under conditions in which the world capitalist system is experiencing its greatest crisis since the end of the Second World War 80 years ago: The class struggle is intensifying under conditions of unprecedented social inequality and escalating capitalist onslaught, while war, genocide and fascism are being normalized.

Almost exactly three years ago, on June 15, 2022, the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu (Socialist Equality Group, SEG) in Turkey applied to be recognized as a section of the ICFI and voted to establish the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi. In our resolution adopted at that time, we stated that “on the basis of both the maturity of the objective situation in the world and the SEG’s agreement with the ICFI on program, principles and historical issues, the founding of the SEP (Turkey) as an expression of the international expansion of the ICFI could no longer be delayed.”^[1]

In recent days, we have witnessed the massive intensification of the crisis of the world capitalist system. As we gather here, the Zionist Israeli state, backed by imperialism, has launched a comprehensive air attack against Iran, Turkey’s neighbor. This could rapidly escalate into a regional war, including Turkey. There is no doubt that these attacks have further radicalized broad masses of workers and youth both in the Middle East and internationally. The Palestinian people in Gaza have been subjected to starvation, ethnic cleansing and genocide by the US/NATO-backed Israeli regime since October 2023, while the US and Israel’s brazen aggression across the region has sparked massive anger and opposition. The question is how to drive this anger and opposition onto a revolutionary path.

Meanwhile, to the north of Turkey, Ukraine’s recent bombing of airports inside Russia, with NATO support, has escalated the danger of a nuclear conflict to unprecedented levels. At the same time, the United States is calling on its Asian allies to prepare for war with China, which it sees as its main rival.

In the United States, the country of two great democratic revolutions, fascist President Donald Trump is leading a coup aimed at abolishing the Constitution and establishing a presidential dictatorship. The Trump administration’s attack on immigrants, which ultimately targets the entire working class, has sparked mass protests. Mass demonstrations will be held across the US tomorrow. Our comrades in the United States, the Socialist Equality Party, are analyzing the developing coup and intervening in the events with a revolutionary perspective and program.

Turkey is not immune to this growing dictatorship, imperialist war, and class war maelstrom sweeping the world. The Turkish bourgeoisie commands NATO’s second-largest army and is deeply involved in the war in Ukraine to the north and the conflict in the Middle East, including the genocide in Gaza, to the south. It rules one of Europe’s most unequal societies in terms of income and wealth. As Leon Trotsky explained in 1929, “Under the impact of class and international contradictions that are too highly charged, the safety switches of democracy either burn out or explode. That is essentially what the short circuiting of dictatorship represents.”^[2]

The similarities between the political and social crisis in the United States, the world’s leading imperialist power, and that in Turkey, a regional capitalist power in the Middle East, bear witness to the global character of the crisis of the capitalist system. This is not a “temporary” crisis. Under these conditions, all claims of progress toward “peace and democracy” are deliberate lies aimed at deceiving the masses. In our statement on the mass protests that erupted in March following the arrest and detention of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem ?mamo?lu, we pointed to the global character of the crisis and the revolutionary way forward: “The revolutionary crisis that broke out in Turkey is a harbinger of the future of other countries. The objective causes that are mobilising the broad masses—the defence of democratic rights, anger at staggering social inequality and opposition to endless imperialist war—are global. The burning question facing the working class in Turkey and internationally is the development of a revolutionary political perspective and leadership.”^[3] The founding congress of the ICFI section in Turkey is a contribution to the development of this leadership.

At the opening of the congress, we stated that we dedicate our founding congress to Comrade Halil Çelik, the leader and founder of our group, who died on December 31, 2018, and we then observed a moment of silence in memory of all comrades who have contributed to the struggle for Marxism-Trotskyism and the world socialist revolution throughout our

history.

I would now like to send our greetings to Comrade Bogdan Syrotiuk, who has been held as a political prisoner by the NATO-backed Ukrainian regime since April 2024. Bogdan, leader of the Young Guard of Bolshevik-Leninists (YGBL), has been imprisoned for taking a principled socialist and anti-war stance against both imperialist powers and the reactionary capitalist regimes in Ukraine and Russia. Comrade Bogdan's courageous stance in prison, rooted in Trotskyist principles, inspires us, and we are certain that this critical congress will also strengthen him.

Last year, at the national congresses of the ICFI sections held following the arrest of Comrade Bogdan, a resolution titled "Free Bogdan Syrotiuk!" was adopted. We once again reaffirm our support for these resolutions and for the ICFI's global campaign for Bogdan's freedom. We pledge to continue working with all our strength to advance the struggle for his release.

On this occasion, I would like to reiterate the call made by Comrade David North, national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US) and chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site*, in his May Day remarks: We send our greetings to all political prisoners in Turkey and around the world who are subjected to the oppression of the capitalist state and deprived of their democratic rights, and we demand their immediate release.

We send our warmest greetings to the Palestinians in Palestine, particularly in Gaza, who are being subjected to ethnic cleansing and genocide by the NATO-backed Zionist state of Israel, and we pledge to advance the struggle to mobilize the working class on the basis of a socialist program to bring an end to this historic oppression.

As the Founding Congress of the Sosyalist E'tilik Partisi, we declare from the outset: The International Committee of the Fourth International, in the words of Trotsky in 1938, is the only political tendency in the world capable of realizing the goal of the "full material and spiritual liberation of the toilers and exploited through the socialist revolution. Nobody will prepare it and nobody will guide it but ourselves."^[4] With this congress, we are founding the Turkish section of the World Party of Socialist Revolution, which has taken on this historic task and responsibility. This congress will be an event that will be widely studied and remembered in the history of Turkey and the broader region in which it is located.

In the above-referenced resolution three years ago, we also stated the following:

The building of a revolutionary party in any country is possible only on the basis of an international perspective, program and party. The only solution to the major problems in Turkey, which is in a critical position in terms of global geopolitics and class struggle, is the international socialist revolution. The founding of the SEP (Turkey) will be an expression of the global expansion of the ICFI, the only political tendency that assumes the task of solving the great historical problems.^[5]

In the same resolution, we stated that the foundation of the Sosyalist E'tilik Partisi is based on our agreement with the ICFI on questions of history, principles and program, and we emphasized that we recognize the ICFI's political authority. This was not without reason; it was based on the critical lessons of our international movement's decades-long fight for Trotskyism and the world socialist revolution, and against all forms of national opportunism. At the root of the political degeneration of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), which was then the British section of the ICFI, lay a gradual retreat from the fight for Trotskyism and the theory of permanent revolution, and the prioritization of building a national party over the world party. This national-opportunist

degeneration reached its peak in 1985 when WRP leaders Gerry Healy, Cliff Slaughter, and Mike Banda rejected the political authority of the ICFI.

David North, then the leader of the Workers League, the forerunner of the Socialist Equality Party in the US, defended Trotskyist principles and program between 1982 and 1984, offering a detailed critique of the WRP's growing nationalist shift to the right. North's critiques were suppressed and swept under the rug by the WRP, which refused to allow these texts to be distributed and discussed throughout the entire ICFI. When the crisis within the WRP erupted in 1985, North's documents formed the basis of the political struggle of the orthodox Trotskyists of the International Committee against the national-opportunist tendency within the WRP. The British Trotskyists led by Gerry Healy made an enormous contribution to ensuring the continuity of the ICFI by leading the struggle against the move toward unprincipled reunification of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the US with the Pabloites between 1961 and 1964. These contributions were defended by the orthodox Trotskyists of the International Committee during the 1985-86 split, and the WRP's abandonment of the principles it had upheld in previous decades was meticulously documented.

Today, we once again emphasize that this critical struggle within the ICFI played a decisive role in ensuring the continuity of Trotskyism as a united international political movement. In the 2022 resolution, we underlined that the ICFI alone represents the political continuity of the world Marxist-Trotskyist movement, stating:

This continuity goes back to the founding of the Left Opposition under the leadership of Leon Trotsky in 1923 to defend the strategy and program of the world socialist revolution against nationalist Stalinist degeneration. It was this strategy and program that guided the October Revolution in 1917 led by the Bolshevik Party in Russia under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky.

The founding of the Fourth International in 1938 under the leadership of Trotsky after the collapse of the Communist International, paving the way for the Nazis to come to power in Germany in 1933; the founding of the International Committee in 1953 by orthodox Trotskyists led by James P. Cannon of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the US against the revisionist-liquidationist tendency led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel; the political struggle by the British Trotskyists led by Gerry Healy against the unprincipled reunification with the Pabloites in 1963; and the struggle of the American Trotskyists led by David North in 1982-86 against the national-opportunist degeneration of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) in Britain and the regaining of control of the IC by orthodox Trotskyists, constitute critical turning points in this political continuity.^[6]

Our party is built on the critical experiences and lessons of the revolutions and counter-revolutions of the twentieth century. Comrade Halil Çelik played a leading role in the training of a cadre based on the careful study and assimilation of these experiences in Turkey, and thus in laying the foundations for the establishment of the Sosyalist E'tilik Partisi.

The group led by Halil, from the 1980s until the early 2000s, when the first contact with the IC was established, went through bitter and challenging experiences with the Pabloite and Morenoite tendencies in Turkey. The struggle against the national-opportunist politics represented by these tendencies was an expression of the relentless search by the group led by Halil for the international party that would ensure the

continuity of the Trotskyist movement and ground itself in Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution—that is, the ICFI. As we noted in the preface to the book *Halil Çelik: A Fighter for Socialism*:

Such a struggle had to be based on a thorough assimilation of the Trotskyist movement's decades-long fight against social democracy, Stalinism and petty-bourgeois politics.

This struggle brought Comrade Halil and his co-thinkers ever closer to the positions of the ICFI. Halil opposed the Pabloites' attribution of a revolutionary role to Stalinism, their support of the union bureaucracy, and their glorification of bourgeois nationalism in the form of the Kurdish nationalist movement. His understanding that these positions fundamentally rejected the continuity of the Fourth International's struggle for Permanent Revolution eventually brought him to the ICFI.^[7]

We emphasize that the Fourth International is a “party of history.” The working class must be armed with historical consciousness, especially the political lessons of the strategic experiences of the twentieth century, to seize power through socialist revolutions, overthrow the world capitalist system, and establish socialism. The Fourth International is the world party that embodies this history and these lessons. The resolution titled “The Historical and International Foundations of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal,” submitted for approval at this founding congress, documents this reality.

We are also a “party of history” in the sense that we focus on resolving the fundamental issues of the epoch of imperialist war and world proletarian revolution that began with the First World War in 1914 and the October Revolution in 1917. The fundamental contradictions of world capitalism that led to the First World War—the contradictions between a global economy and the nation-state system, and between the socialization of production and the private ownership of the means of production—continue to exist. The world socialist revolution that began with the October Revolution, led by Lenin and Trotsky, meant that the working class would set out to resolve these contradictions on an international, revolutionary basis. This is the only way forward for human civilization.

The theory of permanent revolution and the strategy of world socialist revolution formed the basis and guiding principle of the October Revolution. Its international political and organizational expression was the Communist (Third) International (Comintern), founded in 1919 under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky. The Second International collapsed in 1914 when the social democratic parties in Europe betrayed the international socialist program and the working class by supporting their “own” national bourgeoisies in the imperialist war.

Lenin conducted a thorough analysis of the political collapse of the Second International at a historic turning point, revealing its objective roots in the development of imperialism and opportunism as its byproduct. In his 1916 essay, “Opportunism and the Collapse of the Second International,” he wrote:

What is the economic essence of “defending the fatherland” in the war of 1914–15? The bourgeoisie of *all* the great powers is waging war for the carving up and exploitation of the world, for the subjugation of nations. A small circle of the labor bureaucracy, labor aristocracy, and petty-bourgeois followers may receive a share of the bourgeoisie's huge profits. The class basis of social chauvinism and opportunism is the same: the alliance of a privileged small layer of workers with their “own” national

bourgeoisie *against* the masses of the working class, the alliance of the lackeys of the bourgeoisie with it against the class it exploits.

Social-chauvinism and opportunism are the same in their political essence; class collaboration, repudiation of the proletarian dictatorship, rejection of revolutionary action, obeisance to bourgeois legality, non-confidence in the proletariat, and confidence in the bourgeoisie.^[8]

Today, which political tendency outside of the ICFI and its sections can seriously claim not to be the political heirs of opportunism and social chauvinism? “Class collaboration, repudiation of the proletarian dictatorship, rejection of revolutionary action, obeisance to bourgeois legality, non-confidence in the proletariat, and confidence in the bourgeoisie...” These are the distinguishing features of today's Stalinist, Pabloite, and pseudo-left political tendencies.

The October Revolution of 1917 was the product of a principled political struggle based on the rejection of national opportunism, an enemy of the working class. We know that when the February Revolution erupted in Russia in 1917, these petty-bourgeois nationalist class pressures exerted a powerful influence on the leadership of the Bolshevik Party. In Lenin's absence, the party, led by Stalin and Kamenev, like the Mensheviks, tended to support the bourgeois Provisional Government and the continuation of Russia's participation in the imperialist war. Had this leadership and its nationalist, class-collaborationist orientation continued to prevail, the October Revolution would not have been possible.

Lenin's return to Russia in April 1917 and his reorientation of the Bolshevik Party on the basis of a strategy of international socialist revolution constituted the indispensable turning point that led to the October Revolution. The unique political and intellectual collaboration between Lenin and Trotsky was based on a joint program for world socialist revolution.

The Communist International set out by declaring political war on opportunism and placing the struggle against its existence or emergence within its own sections at the center of its agenda. However, after the October Revolution, the revolutionary uprisings of the working class in Europe were defeated due to the betrayals of the social democratic parties and the absence of communist parties being politically prepared to lead the revolution. The young Soviet republic suffered greatly from the Civil War, which was the product of a violent counterrevolutionary offensive by imperialist powers and the White armies. Under these conditions, the political expression of the interests of the growing bureaucratic layer in the Soviet Union was Stalin's program of “socialism in one country,” announced in 1924.

This marked a radical break with the theory of Permanent Revolution and proletarian internationalism, which formed the theoretical and political basis of the October Revolution of 1917. These fundamental principles were defended and developed with the formation of the Left Opposition under Trotsky in 1923.

There is not the slightest exaggeration in stating that this was “the most consequential political struggle of the 20th century.” As David North noted in his lecture at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on October 24, 2023, “If the outcome of that fight had been different, had it ended with the victory of the Trotskyist faction and the defeat of Stalinism, the 20th century would have been the century in which the victory of the world socialist revolution had been secured.”^[9]

The characteristics that Lenin identified as the political essence of the opportunism that dominated the Second International and severed it from the struggle for socialism increasingly came to dominate the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Comintern, with dire consequences that continue to this day. This was followed by the class collaboration that led to the defeat of the 1925-27 Chinese Revolution, and, more importantly,

by a disastrous policy that paved the way for the Nazis to come to power in Germany in 1933. The Stalinists rejected Trotsky's call for the formation of a united front of social democratic and communist workers against the fascist threat. They declared the Social Democratic Party "social fascist," dividing the working class and paving the way for Hitler's rise to power.

The great historical event that led Trotsky, who had been in exile in Istanbul, Büyükdada (Prinkipo), since 1929, to call for the establishment of the Fourth International was this catastrophe in Germany. Shortly before leaving Büyükdada, on July 15, 1933, Trotsky wrote the following in his call for the building of the Fourth International:

An organization which was not roused by the thunder of fascism and which submits docilely to such outrageous acts of the bureaucracy demonstrates thereby that it is dead and that nothing can ever revive it. To say this openly and publicly is our direct duty toward the proletariat and its future. In all our subsequent work it is necessary to take as our point of departure the historical collapse of the official Communist International.^[10]

Trotsky played the major role in ensuring the historical and political continuity of the international Marxist movement by leading the efforts to build the Fourth International over the next five years. These efforts involved an uncompromising political struggle against Stalinism, centrism, bourgeois nationalism and all forms of opportunism. As Trotsky himself stated, this was "the most important task of his life," and no one else could have carried it out. In 1935, he noted:

The collapse of the two Internationals has posed a problem which none of the leaders of these Internationals is at all equipped to solve. The vicissitudes of my personal fate have confronted me with this problem and armed me with important experience in dealing with it. There is now no one except me to carry out the mission of arming a new generation with the revolutionary method over the heads of the leaders of the Second and Third International.^[11]

In his remarks on the founding of the Fourth International in 1938, he also explained that

The old Internationals—the Second, the Third, that of Amsterdam, we will add to them also the London Bureau—are rotten through and through. The great events which rush upon mankind will not leave of these outlived organizations one stone upon another. Only the Fourth International looks with confidence at the future. It is the world party of Socialist Revolution! There never was a greater task on the earth. Upon every one of us rests a tremendous historical responsibility.^[12]

Over the next 87 years, the accuracy of these words was proven. The Stalinist bureaucracy, after betraying countless revolutions around the world, completed its final service to imperialism by dissolving the Soviet Union in 1991. Alongside the capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe, the Maoists opened up the Chinese working class to intense capitalist exploitation. These events confirmed Trotsky's and the ICFI's analysis of the counterrevolutionary character of Stalinism and the program of

political revolution by the working class.

The Pabloite revisionist-opportunist tendency that emerged within the Fourth International after World War II also shared the fate of its political forebears and rotted from top to bottom. This tendency was a political expression of adaptation to the conditions under which Stalinism betrayed the European revolutions and expanded toward Eastern Europe, while world capitalism achieved relative stability under US dominance. It repudiated the revolutionary potential of the working class and the role of the Fourth International in resolving the crisis of revolutionary leadership. The Pabloite orientation toward Stalinism reached its peak when they became the political apologists for capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union.

Under the leadership of James P. Cannon, leader of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the United States, the orthodox Trotskyists, including Gerry Healy in Britain, founded the International Committee in 1953 to oppose the Pabloites' efforts to liquidate the Fourth International within Stalinist, social democratic or bourgeois nationalist movements.

The ICFI was established to defend the fundamental principles upon which the world Trotskyist movement was built. The founding principles, which we reaffirm here today, have been vindicated and remain valid:

1. The death agony of the capitalist system threatens the destruction of civilization through worsening depressions, world wars and barbaric manifestations like fascism. The development of atomic weapons today underlines the danger in the gravest possible way.

2. The descent into the abyss can be avoided only by replacing capitalism with the planned economy of socialism on a world scale and thus resuming the spiral of progress opened up by capitalism in its early days.

3. This can be accomplished only under the leadership of the working class as the only truly revolutionary class in society. But the working class itself faces a crisis of leadership although the world relationship of social forces was never so favorable as today for the workers to take the road to power.

4. To organize itself for carrying out this world-historic aim the working class in each country must construct a revolutionary socialist party in the pattern developed by Lenin; that is, a combat party capable of dialectically combining democracy and centralism—democracy in arriving at decisions, centralism in carrying them out; a leadership controlled by the ranks, ranks able to carry forward under fire in disciplined fashion.

5. The main obstacle to this is Stalinism, which attracts workers through exploiting the prestige of the October 1917 Revolution in Russia, only later, as it betrays their confidence, to hurl them either into the arms of the Social Democracy, into apathy, or back into illusions in capitalism. The penalty for these betrayals is paid by the working people in the form of consolidation of fascist or monarchist forces, and new outbreaks of wars fostered and prepared by capitalism. From its inception, the Fourth International set as one of its major tasks the revolutionary overthrow of Stalinism inside and outside the USSR.

6. The need for flexible tactics facing many sections of the Fourth International, and parties or groups sympathetic to its program, makes it all the more imperative that they know how to fight imperialism and all of its petty-bourgeois agencies (such as nationalist formations or trade-union bureaucracies) without capitulation to Stalinism; and, conversely, know how to fight Stalinism (which in the final analysis is a petty-bourgeois agency of imperialism) without capitulating to imperialism.^[13]

We have addressed in detail, as is necessary, how the International Committee has defended these principles, through sharp political struggles up to the present day, in the resolution on “Historical and International Foundations” submitted to the congress. The “Statement of Principles” also explains our programmatic foundations derived from Marxist theory and critical historical experience. As the Trotskyist movement, our detailed explanation of our history and principles, and our unwavering commitment to them, distinguishes us from all other political tendencies.

Today, as Trotsky foresaw, we have entered a period in which the political domination of the old labour leaderships and their revisionist appendages over the working class has come to an end, and an objective change has taken place in the relationship between the Trotskyist movement and the international working class. The process of capitalist globalization has brought about an increasingly integrated world economy and a vast, globally interconnected working class. This has provided the International Committee with a much more favorable basis for developing its political struggle for the world socialist revolution compared to the past, while undermining Stalinism, social democracy and Pabloism, each of which has outlived its time and represents a politically reactionary national program and perspective.

Thirty-four years after the dissolution of the USSR by the Stalinists in 1991, all claims by the ideologues of capitalism of the legitimacy of their socio-economic system have been completely shattered. They declared that class struggle had come to an end and that socialism had collapsed. In fact, as the ICFI explained at the time, it was not socialism that collapsed, but Stalinism. Moreover, this was an expression of the deepening crisis of the nation-state system globally. Their claims of prosperity, peace and democracy had no basis; on the contrary, the dissolution of the USSR would only intensify the imperialist drive to re-divide the world. The ruling class’s attack on the social conditions of the working class would lead to increasing resistance and intensified class struggle. Growing social inequality and escalating imperialist war would undermine democratic forms of rule.

Moreover, the dynamics of economic globalization identified by the IC as early as 1987-88 have greatly intensified the contradictions of the world capitalist system. The same dynamics would lead to the international character, not only of the content, but also of the form of the class struggle. The alternatives were either a Third World War, as the imperialist solution, or a world socialist revolution, representing the solution of the working class.

The ICFI’s analysis and perspectives have been confirmed. To emphasize once again, we are convening this founding congress under the conditions of an escalating global imperialist war, rising fascism and authoritarian regimes, and intensifying class struggles. It is impossible to discuss the major events that have deeply affected world society and deepened the crisis of the capitalist system in recent times without highlighting the COVID-19 pandemic. The response of capitalist governments to the ongoing pandemic has not been in accordance with the demands of science and public health, but has instead been dictated by the selfish interests of the capitalist class. This has led to approximately 30 million excess deaths, and countless people are struggling with health problems caused by COVID-19. Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie has even stopped pretending to fight climate change.

Under these conditions, we not only assert that the ICFI is the only revolutionary socialist tendency, the only Trotskyist tendency in the world, but we also prove this historically and politically. Which other political tendency, apart from the ICFI, has a comprehensive Marxist analysis and revolutionary solution to the fundamental global issues facing humanity? Which other political tendency is engaged in the struggle to educate and train a new generation of revolutionaries in the lessons of history, especially the history of the Trotskyist movement?

In this struggle, the defense of our historical leader Leon Trotsky, who

was assassinated 85 years ago in Mexico by a Stalinist agent, is of decisive importance. The *Security and Fourth International* investigation launched by the ICFI in 1975 into the circumstances surrounding Trotsky’s assassination, which is still ongoing, represents a historic contribution to this fight. On the 85th anniversary of Trotsky’s assassination, we will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the investigation’s inception in the coming months, with comprehensive and intensive educational work and public meetings.

Another critical contribution to the defense of Trotsky was made by refuting the biographical slanders of British historians Robert Service, Ian Thatcher and Geoffrey Swain. These biographies constituted a “preemptive attack” aimed at preventing a new generation entering the revolutionary struggle from being influenced by Trotsky’s ideas. This attack was repelled with a powerful counterattack in the form of *In Defense of Leon Trotsky*, by David North. This work, also published in Turkish, serves as a basis for the education of a new generation of Trotskyist revolutionaries.

One cannot be a Marxist revolutionary without studying and defending Trotsky. Comrade David North explained this in his speech he gave last year at a memorial meeting for this great revolutionary in Büyükada. He said:

One cannot understand the political contradictions of the present-day world—which is among other things manifested in a worldwide resurgence of fascism—without a systematic study of Trotsky’s writings. His theory of permanent revolution is as essential to the strategy and practice of international socialism—that is, the struggle to secure the future of humanity—as the theories of Einstein and Heisenberg are to the comprehension of the physical universe.^[14]

In this important speech, North also refuted some of the arguments of British academic John E. Kelly, who claimed that Trotsky and Trotskyism were “irrelevant.” Kelly, however, even as he claimed Trotskyism was of no significance, published two books between 2018 and 2023 targeting the Trotskyist movement: *Contemporary Trotskyism* and *The Twilight of World Trotskyism*.

In *The Twilight of World Trotskyism*, Kelly made no effort to hide the fact that his real target was the ICFI:

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) was initially founded in 1953 but re-emerged from the implosion of the WRP in 1985 under the leadership of the American activist David North, an immodest and arrogant individual. For North and his colleagues, there is only one current of Marxism: “Trotskyism is the Marxism of the 21st Century,” and within the Trotskyist universe, there is only one genuine Trotskyist party.^[15]

Kelly then argues that reformism is not dead and that the historical dilemma of our era—“socialism or barbarism”—is invalid, stating:

The idea that the reformist era is at an end and that world politics is reduced to a simple binary choice—socialism or barbarism—is conceptually naïve and empirically flawed.^[16]

One might think that Kelly is talking about a world other than the one we live in, where imperialist war, genocide, and fascist barbarism have

prevailed, where the social and democratic reforms won through generations of struggle by broad masses have been eliminated one after another, and where class struggle has become more acute. The objective of Kelly's books is to undermine the growing interest in the struggle for world socialist revolution embodied in the history and program of the Trotskyist movement. This attack must be taken seriously and fought against.

Another recent attack targeting our movement was a biographical hack work by an Irish academic, Aidan Beatty, affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), titled *The Party is Always Right: The Untold Story of Gerry Healy and British Trotskyism*. Under the guise of a biography, Beatty attempts to discredit Healy, who played a major role in the history and continuity of the Trotskyist movement, with slanderous allegations. Beatty's "work," funded by Zionist institutions, is a targeted attack, as evidenced by his irrelevant attack on David North in the conclusion. We support the powerful responses to this reactionary attack published on the *World Socialist Web Site* and emphasize their importance as educational material for revolutionary cadre.

The founding of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi in Turkey, a critical country at the crossroads of Europe and the Middle East, coincides with an important event that bears witness to the correctness of the struggle for Trotskyism and the theory of permanent revolution: In 1978, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which was founded in the Lice district of Diyarbakır, Turkey with the claim of being a "Marxist-Leninist" party, announced at its congress held on May 5-7 that it had decided to dissolve itself and end armed struggle.

What does the intersection of this liquidation congress on one side and our founding congress on the other signify historically? I will argue that this represents, on the one hand, the bankruptcy and decline of the bourgeois nationalist program, and on the other, the validation and rise of the international socialist program of the working class.

In the draft resolution on "Historical and International Foundations," we explain that the PKK was founded as a Stalinist petty-bourgeois nationalist movement, not a Marxist one, and that it never represented a way forward toward ending the oppression of the Kurdish people or defending the international interests of the working class.

Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of the PKK, who has been held as a political prisoner on İmralı Island since 1999, is the chief architect of the PKK's resolution to dissolve itself, together with the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In a letter sent from prison at the end of February, Öcalan justified his call for the party to dissolve itself as follows: "The collapse of real socialism in the 1990s due to internal reasons, the erosion of identity denial in the country, and advancements in freedom of expression led to a lack of meaning and excessive repetition within the PKK. Consequently, like its counterparts, it reached the end of its lifespan, making its dissolution necessary."

In evaluating this call on the WSWS, we explained:

The PKK's "lack of meaning" is not due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union or the supposed solution of the Kurdish question, but to the bankruptcy of national programs in the era of global integration of capitalist production.^[17]

Öcalan speaks of the collapse of so-called "real socialism," but like many others, he ignores the historical struggle of the Trotskyist movement against Stalinism and the justified nature of this struggle. Öcalan, who is reported to have sent two letters to the PKK congress in May, concludes his letter dated April 27, "Nationalist socialism leads to defeat, democratic society socialism leads to victory." The claim of "democratic society socialism" has no connection whatsoever with the struggle to put an end

to the imperialist-capitalist system and bourgeois rule, which is the ultimate source of national oppression, and to establish socialism in order to eliminate borders and classes worldwide.

In his long letter dated April 25 to the PKK congress, Öcalan basically confirms our analysis of the negotiations between Ankara and the PKK and expresses the essence of the deal as follows: "My belief and hope for success are high. Achieving this will lead to important successes not only for the Kurds and Kurdistan but also for the region. Any success achieved here will also have an impact on Syria, Iran, and Iraq. The Republic of Turkey will also have the opportunity to renew itself, crown itself with democracy, and take the lead in the region."

The regime in Turkey, which Öcalan claims will be "crowned with democracy," is a regime that is increasingly suspending even the basic democratic rights enshrined in the extremely limited current constitution, and filling prisons with its political opponents. While thousands of political prisoners from the Kurdish movement or left-wing organizations rot in jail, even leaders of the Kemalist Republican People's Party (CHP), a pro-NATO and right-wing bourgeois party, such as Ekrem İmamoğlu, are added to their ranks.

As for the "opportunity [for Turkey] ... to take the lead in the region," this refers to a Turkish bourgeoisie that has resolved its conflict with the PKK and united its forces with the Kurdish bourgeoisie, strengthening its hand and increasing its share in the intensifying imperialist war of redivision in the region under the leadership of its ally, the US. This US-NATO-backed deal is not against the imperialist war of re-division that has been going on in the Middle East for over 30 years, but is itself a part of it. The Kurdish people living in Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran are among the victims of these wars. After Iraq and Syria, Iran is now the target of imperialism and Zionism.

The fact that the Kurdish question, which has roots dating back more than a century and is an international issue, continues to exist today as a basic democratic question, vindicates Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution: in the imperialist epoch, the bourgeoisie in a country with belated capitalist development is organically incapable of solving basic democratic questions. The resolution of these issues necessitates the working-class seizing power as part of the struggle for international socialist revolution.

The PKK is not the first national movement in the region to completely abandon its program and objectives and admit its historical and political bankruptcy. The statement made by the Political Committee of the Workers League, following the agreement between Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat and the US and Israel in 1988, testifies to the strength and validity of the ICFT's analysis and perspective based on the theory of permanent revolution. Moreover, the following lines are also highly relevant to the deal between the PKK and Ankara:

Marxists implacably reject such accords and combat every pacifist illusion generated by the petty-bourgeois agencies of imperialism that "peace talks" can put an end to war and oppression. Marxists advance instead the program of class war to put an end to imperialism. Apologists for such deals only reveal their own uncritical acceptance of the whole imperialist world order. ...

These events cannot be understood outside of a class analysis of the PLO. Its past adherence to the armed struggle and the heroism of its members notwithstanding, it is and always has been a bourgeois national movement. Its nationalism is that of the bourgeoisie which seeks to create the best possible conditions for the exploitation of its "own" working class. The failure of this bourgeoisie to establish its own state has in no way mitigated this drive.^[18]

At the beginning of the same statement, the Workers League made the following historical prediction:

Far from being the road to “peace” proclaimed by the capitalist media and the imperialist politicians, this acceptance by Yassir Arafat and the bourgeois nationalist leadership of the PLO of the conditions dictated by Washington will only open the door to an intensified assault on the oppressed masses of Palestine and throughout the Middle East.^[19]

The liberation of the Kurdish people is impossible while the Palestinian people are being subjected to genocide. The liberation of both peoples and of all the peoples of the Middle East, who have been targets of imperialist aggression for decades, lies in uniting their forces with the working class in the imperialist centers and establishing a Socialist Federation of the Middle East. The struggle for an end to the suffering by the oppressed peoples and the recognition of their democratic rights is an inseparable part of this program. Our party, which rejects both Turkish and Kurdish bourgeois nationalism, which are both aligned with imperialism, puts forward the only revolutionary program capable of uniting Turkish and Kurdish workers in the struggle for a regime based on social equality, anti-imperialism and democracy. This means struggling for workers’ power based on the theory of permanent revolution.

At the end of his letter dated April 25, Öcalan advances a program for the entire Middle East and calls for a new “International,” writing:

This process will have international consequences as well as regional ones. Regional confederalism is emerging as an absolute necessity. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, sectarian conflicts, and the contradictions of the nation-state can only be resolved through Democratic Confederalism.

This solution also requires a new International. It would be correct and historic to launch efforts for an International with our friends without delay.

Öcalan’s “democratic confederalism” is not opposed to the aggression to establish absolute imperialist hegemony of the United States in the Middle East, but rather is aligned with it. The obvious proof of this is the formation that emerged in the northeast of Syria, known as “Rojava,” under the leadership of the YPG, which is aligned with the PKK and Öcalan, as a result of the regime-change war instigated by the US and its regional allies such as Turkey in 2011. This de facto autonomous formation, cited as an example of democratic confederalism, is in close collaboration with the US armed forces, which, like Turkey, are occupying forces in Syria. This bears witness to the pro-imperialist and reactionary character of both Turkish nationalists, who have the second largest army in NATO, and Kurdish nationalists, who have emerged as close allies of the US and NATO in Syria.

Comrade David North, in his foreword to the Turkish edition and then to the thirtieth anniversary edition of *The Heritage We Defend: A Contribution to the History of the Fourth International*, drew attention to the origins of Öcalan’s “democratic confederalism.” Öcalan was influenced by Murray Bookchin (1921–2006) during his readings after being handed over to Ankara by the CIA and imprisoned in 1999. Bookchin, who was honored by the PKK as “one of the greatest social scientists of the 20th century” after his death, was a former member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the United States. Bookchin joined the Morrow-Goldman tendency, which emerged within the SWP in 1944 as

an open right-wing opposition during World War II. This tendency, representing a demoralized adaptation to the prevailing conditions, argued that socialist revolution was no longer possible and that the Fourth International should become an appendage of bourgeois democracy. They essentially proposed that the Fourth International should dissolve itself, and they were defeated by orthodox Trotskyists led by SWP leader Cannon.

After the war, Bookchin broke away from the SWP and developed a collaboration with the German Josef Weber (1901-1959) from 1947. As North cited, he “in 1971, dedicated his book, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*” to Weber and thanked him for having “formulated more than twenty years ago the outlines of the Utopian project developed in this book.”^[20]

Weber had previously led the “Three Theses” group (“The Retrogressionists”) that emerged from the International Communists of Germany (IKD—Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands), which was the German section of the Fourth International at the time. This group had argued, even before the Morrow-Goldman tendency, that the struggle for world socialist revolution had been lost and that what was now at stake was a struggle for national liberation and bourgeois democracy through a process of historical retrogression. As a logical consequence of these views, Weber broke with the Fourth International and Trotskyism. In a letter dated October 11, 1946, he declared, “The Fourth International is dead, and, moreover, it has never existed.”^[21]

This claim is also advanced today by several tendencies that falsely call themselves “Trotskyist.” Some of them argue that there are “multiple heirs” and multiple “Trotskyist” tendencies of the Fourth International in the world. They even go so far as to propose “refounding the Fourth International” together in alliance with neo-Stalinists. Neither Weber nor today’s pseudo-Trotskyists who agree with his thesis have been able to prove these claims, nor can they. The Second International and the Third International died for the cause of revolution due to the historical betrayals of their leadership, as explained above. The Fourth International, on the other hand, has ensured the political continuity of the international socialist program and principles since its founding in 1938 under the leadership of Trotsky. The resolution “Historical and International Foundations” presented at the founding congress documents this history. There is no such thing as multiple “Fourth Internationals.” It exists under the leadership of the International Committee and leads the struggle for the world socialist revolution. This founding congress itself bears witness to this fact.

Our congress is convening under conditions where we are witnessing numerous signs of the growing political and social radicalization of the working class and youth alongside the deepening crisis of capitalism globally. The major events of recent times—the COVID-19 pandemic, the US-NATO war against Russia over Ukraine, the genocide in Gaza, the growing authoritarianism and intensifying class struggles internationally, particularly in the US—have confirmed the analysis and prognosis of the ICFI in its 2020 perspective titled “The decade of the socialist revolution begins.” However, as noted in that statement, “the spontaneous struggles of workers and their instinctive striving for socialism are, by themselves, inadequate. The transformation of the class struggle into a conscious movement for socialism is a question of political leadership.”^[22] The resolution of the question of political leadership is not an automatic process. It requires active struggle for the program of the revolutionary party. The founding of the Sosyalist E’itlik Partisi in Turkey represents an important step forward in the ICFI’s struggle to resolve this crisis of political leadership on a world scale.

We are witnessing growing interest in the Trotskyist program that we are fighting for on an international scale, and the rising influence of the ICFI. This confirms our assessment made in 2019: the Trotskyist movement has entered a new stage in its history, the fifth stage. As David

North explained in that year: “The objective processes of economic globalization, identified by the International Committee more than 30 years ago, have undergone a further colossal development. Combined with the emergence of new technologies that have revolutionized communications, these processes have internationalized the class struggle to a degree that would have been hard to imagine even 25 years ago. The revolutionary struggle of the working class will develop as an interconnected and unified world movement. The International Committee of the Fourth International will be built as the conscious political leadership of this objective socio-economic process. It will counterpose to the capitalist politics of imperialist war the class-based strategy of world socialist revolution. This is the essential historical task of the new stage in the history of the Fourth International.”^[23]

The process of economic globalization over the past decades has also led to tremendous socio-economic changes in Turkey and brought forth a massive and militant working class that is objectively integrated with the global working class. The establishment of the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi in Turkey, given these class dynamics and Turkey’s critical position in world geopolitics, marks an important development exemplifying the global expansion of the ICFI.

The success of the objective tendency toward socialist revolution depends on our party fulfilling its leadership role. This means fighting for the political and organizational independence of the working class. This requires theoretical and political clarity nourished by an uninterrupted struggle against all hostile political tendencies, defended and developed through Trotskyism. For this, our cadres and the workers and youth who join the struggle must be educated and prepared based on the lessons of history, Marxist theory and a Trotskyist political perspective. Our scientific analysis of the world situation shows that the crisis of the capitalist system and the class struggle will intensify. There will be no shortage of radicalized workers and youth who will join the struggle. But ultimately, the perspective that guides these struggles and who leads them will be decisive.

The mass protests triggered by the arrest and detention of Ekrem ?mamo?lu, mayor of Istanbul and presidential candidate of the CHP, in March have confirmed this once again. Broad masses, mostly young people, took to the streets against this state repression, which targeted fundamental democratic rights, such as the right to vote and be elected and the right to a fair trial. All polls and interviews among the protesters have revealed that issues such as social inequality and growing concerns about the future also played a major role in driving this mass eruption, which defied the threat of arrest and police violence. However, with the help of numerous Stalinist, Pabloite and pseudo-leftist tendencies, the CHP managed to suppress this significant, spontaneously emerging movement. The desire of broad working-class and youth masses for a future where democracy, social equality and peace prevail was in conflict not only with the Erdo?an government but also with the CHP. The claims that the CHP is an alternative “left” party to Erdo?an’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) or that it can be pushed to the left must be clearly refuted. The CHP, which founded the Turkish Republic and is one of the traditional parties of the Turkish bourgeoisie, is a pro-NATO and imperialist-aligned party opposed to the interests of the working class. During mass protests, the CHP leader emphasized his party’s loyalty to NATO and called on its ally in Britain, the “NATO party” Labour Party. The CHP has once again demonstrated that it is no less hostile to the working class than the Erdo?an government, most recently in its attack on the ?zmir municipal strike and the right to strike.

While opposing state repression against the CHP and defending basic democratic rights, we emphasized that this does not constitute any political support for the CHP and clarified the class character and role of this party. In contrast, even political tendencies that previously claimed not to support the CHP have proposed a “popular front” type of

collaboration with it. These events underscore the relevance of historical issues. The issues of Kemalism and the “popular fronts,” whose roots date back to the 1920s and 1930s, are not a thing of the past, and directly influence today’s politics. A political movement lacking a Marxist, i.e., Trotskyist, historical analysis of these issues cannot develop a revolutionary perspective and policy toward today’s events. The “Historical and International Foundations” resolution addresses these and many other critical historical questions.

Now, the founding congress faces the following task: to discuss and adopt critical resolutions that will be examined by countless workers, young people and intellectuals who will turn to the party in the coming period, that will be the lifeblood of the party’s construction, and that will form the political basis of the coming socialist revolution: “Statement of Principles,” the “Historical and International Foundations,” and the Constitution.

“A historic advance in the fight for Trotskyism: The International Committee of the Fourth International accepts application of the Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu to become its section in Turkey,” 27 June 2022. URL:<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2022/06/27/truk-j27.html>

Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1929, “Is Parliamentary Democracy Likely to Replace the Soviets?” pp. 52-57.

Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu, “The crisis in Turkey and the fight for revolutionary leadership,” 28 March 2025. URL:<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2025/03/28/trkc-m28.html>

Leon Trotsky, “On the Founding of the Fourth International,” October 1938. URL:<https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1938/10/foundfi.htm>

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Sosyalist E?itlik Grubu, “Preface to *Halil Çelik: A Fighter for Socialism*,” December 31, 2021. URL:<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2021/12/31/hali-d31.html>

This essay, written by Lenin in German, was published in the *Vorbote* magazine in January 1916. There are minor differences between this version and the version published in Russian in the ?????????? ?????????? (Proletarian Revolution) in 1924 and translated into English. Here, the quote is taken from the Turkish translation of the German version. Therefore, the German version was translated into English. For the German original version:

https://web.archive.org/web/20160316074633/http://mlwerke.de/le/le22/le22_107.htm

The English version:<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/dec/x01.htm>

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